



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

Last week I had the opportunity to join a wonderful panel of speakers and our partners with the Scottsdale, Greater Phoenix, Tempe and Chandler CVBs for the Mexico 101 seminar called “How to Capture this Billion Dollar Market.” More than 125 tourism industry representatives were in attendance to learn more about the value of the Mexican market and how they can effectively use their resources to attract these visitors. In order for Arizona to achieve success in the Mexican market, our tourism industry must make a long-term commitment to work together to collectively sell the destination. The panel included Barbara Jackson, AOT’s in-market Mexico representative, Rodolfo Madero from Descubre Phoenix in Hermosillo, Kristi Mastrantuono from the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa and Kate Cavaliere with Westcor Shopping Centers. Each of these panelists offered a slightly different take on working with the Mexican market based on their area of expertise, but the overall message was the same – the Mexican visitor is critically important to Arizona and we must remain vigilant in our marketing efforts so as to not lose market share.

In addition, I spoke briefly to the group about the new Mexico visitation study that AOT is sponsoring along with our partners at the Maricopa County DMOs, the Metropolitan Tucson CVB and Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. This year-long study started this month and is designed to give us a clearer picture of the Mexican visitor, both those that arrive by air and those that cross one of our land borders. The only annual data we receive is for air visitors, and with the increasing importance of the drive market, we are looking forward to gaining a better understanding of the impact of those visitors that arrive by car.

Have a great week.



Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

AOT Welcomes New Staff Member

AOT welcomes Anousone “Johnny” Muongpack as the new Web Content Manager. Johnny will be responsible for the development of AOT’s Web site, www.arizonaguide.com, as well as handle content updates and general support of Web site components. Before joining AOT, Johnny worked for the City of Surprise as a Web Specialist and branded, developed, designed, managed and updated 16 department Web sites. Johnny can be contact at 602-364-3710 or via e-mail at amuongpack@azot.gov.

Trippin' with AOT

World Travel Market 2007 – Trade Show Opportunity

AOT invites you to participate in World Travel Market 2007 in London, England from November 12th to November 15th. WTM is the premier, global event for the travel industry as well as the largest travel trade show in the United Kingdom. AOT's attendance at the show is extremely important because it raises Arizona awareness with travel industry and media professionals, generates sales leads and maintains status as a key player in the tourism industry. In 2006, there were more than 46,000 travel industry professionals and media in attendance. The cost to participate is \$2,000 U.S. for the primary delegate and \$500 U.S. for the second delegate. Please contact Loretta Belonio for further information at 602-364-3725 or via e-mail at lbelonio@azot.gov.

Industry News

International Visits Rose 2 Percent in April

The Department of Commerce says 4.0 million international visitors traveled to the U.S. in April, an increase of almost 2 percent over April 2006. Total visitation in the first four months of 2007 was up 7 percent from the same period in 2006. International visitors spent \$9.7 billion during April, up 10 percent from April 2006 and \$38.0 billion year-to-date, up 8 percent from the same period in 2006. Overseas arrivals, excluding Canada and Mexico, were up 6 percent through April. Canadian visitation grew 3 percent over April 2006, while arrivals from Mexico among those traveling to interior U.S. points were up 3 percent in April. Details at 202-482-0140.
(Special to TA)

Discover America Urges House to Act on Travel Reforms

The Discover America Partnership on Tuesday sent a letter to the newly formed House conference on H.R. 1, the Improving America's Security Act of 2007, urging them to adopt vital travel reforms included in the Senate version of the bill (S. 4). Among other things, the bill would authorize expansion of the Visa Waiver Program to countries that agree to share information on

security threats and lost or stolen travel documents, authorize the development and implementation of a fully automated electronic travel authorization system to collect basic biological information to determine in advance of travel the eligibility of a visitor to travel to the U.S. under the VWP, and establish a model ports-of-entry program to provide a more efficient and welcoming international arrival process in order to promote business travel and tourism to the U.S. Details at 202-408-2172. (*Special to TA; Modern Agent.com*)

U.S. Demand for Air Travel Continues to Rise

Forbes reports that the number of passengers flying on U.S. airlines rose in April the seventh straight month, compared with year ago levels, according to a government tally released Thursday. The Transportation Department's Bureau of Transportation Statistics said U.S. airlines carried 64.9 million domestic and international passengers in April, up 2.7 percent from the same month last year.

Poll Finds New Trends in Girls-Getaways

The ever popular "girls-getaway" has gone upscale and extends beyond the traditional weekend escape, reveals a new poll of 246 American Express Travel agents. "The poll, which found an increase in 'girls-getaways' according to two-thirds of agents, also found that women traveling together are seeking more active and luxurious vacations," said American Express. Three in four agents said that "girls-getaways" – including vacations with girlfriends or female relatives – are a significant trend. While spa, beach and shopping vacations still dominate as favorites for "girls-getaways," agents say women are increasingly taking cruise, culinary, city and active vacations that include golf (36 percent), skiing (33 percent), scuba diving and biking (20 percent). More than two-thirds (68 percent) of agents polled reported that when traveling together, women are indulging in more luxurious vacations than in years past. The majority of agents (56 percent) say these getaways are not merely weekend retreats, rather they are between 4-7 days long. While away, women are splurging on ultra-customized tours and experiences (42 percent), traveling first or business class (36 percent), and staying in private villas (20 percent). More than one-third (35 percent) of agents said women are spending between \$2,600 to \$5,000 per person when traveling with a group of girlfriends or female relatives. Even bachelorette getaways are going more upscale, say 57 percent of agents polled. In order by ranking, agents cited the most popular "girls-getaway" destinations as: the Caribbean, Mexico, Europe, Canada and South America. "Many women consider their 'girls-getaways' to be the highlight of their year," said Audrey Hendley, vice president of American Express Travel. (*Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter*)

Destination Loyalty Drives Choice

A new 2007 telephone survey for the U.S. Tour Operators Association shows that destination loyalty drives the majority of decisions about where to go on vacation. A full two-thirds of 1,000 consumers polled said that place is the most important factor when planning a vacation. Price and value are important elements, but for the majority, they tend to be considered after the destination decision has been made. The poll also shows that people tend to prefer returning to destinations they like. Nearly a third of Americans polled (31%) said they typically repeat favorite vacation spots, but sometimes try new destinations. Another 22% said they stick to a few tried and true places. Only 16% said that they look for a new destination each trip. (*Chicago Tribune, 7/17; Modern Agent.com*)

Virgin America's Flights Set for Aug. 8

Maverick airline Virgin America plans to begin selling tickets today, giving travelers their first chance to book a trip on planes equipped to pamper passengers even when they aren't flying first-

class. The airline's inaugural flights are scheduled to take off Aug. 8 from Los Angeles and New York's Kennedy International Airport and arrive at roughly the same time late that morning in San Francisco, Virgin America's hub. A one-way ticket between Los Angeles and San Francisco will start at \$44, while one-way tickets for the San Francisco-New York flights will start at \$139. Virgin America will also sell tickets for flights to Las Vegas and Washington, D.C., scheduled to start in September and October. Conceived by British billionaire Richard Branson, Virgin America is promising to shake up the U.S. airline industry by making flying a more luxurious experience at affordable prices. (*AP*; *Houston Chronicle.com/Business*; *Page 1B, USA Today*)